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Research Article

Tinker, Tailor, Scholar, Spy: Holmes Welch, Buddhism, and the Cold War

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Drawing on archival research and oral history, this article examines the career of Holmes Welch (1921–1981). Welch is a towering figure in the study of Buddhism whose trilogy on modern Chinese Buddhism stood as the definitive work on the topic for decades and remains a touchstone today. In many ways, Welch appears ahead of its time. Yet an investigation of Welch's papers makes clear that his work can only be fully understood in the context of the Cold War, for it was not only shaped by but also served the American struggle against Communism. Welch's formation as a scholar took place less at Harvard, where he earned a master's, than Hong Kong, where he served as a political officer in the Foreign Service. Afterward, he continued to write and consult in the service of Cold War objectives into the early 1970s. This intertwining of the academic and the political in his work and career suggests the existence of a "hidden transcript" of Buddhist Studies and the Cold War that merits further investigation.

Keywords: Modern Buddhism**;** Welch, Holmes; Cold War; World Fellowship of Buddhists; China; Asia Foundation; Buddhist studies; Area studies

Holmes Welch is a towering figure in the study of modern Chinese Buddhism. Until the wave of renewed interest in the topic that began at the end of the 1990s, his trilogy—*The Practice of Chinese Buddhism* (1967b), *The Buddhist Revival in China* (1968), and *Buddhism under Mao* (1972)—seemed to be not only the definitive word on the topic, but the last one. Even now, as monographs, articles, and dissertations accumulate, his work remains an essential touchstone. As one scholar in the field put it, "Whenever you start a new project on modern Chinese Buddhism, the first thing you do is check in Welch, and you will probably find at least one footnote on your topic" (Hammerstrom and Scott 2017: 197). It is not merely the range of Welch's studies that is striking, however; it is how much they feel ahead of their time. Writing in the 1960s, when what little scholarship on Buddhism in China as was available was focused squarely on doctrinal history and textual analysis in the tradition's medieval "golden age" (e.g. Wright 1959; Ch'en 1964; Robinson

1967), Welch painted a picture of concrete social practices and their twentieth-century transformations, drawing heavily on oral interviews and periodicals. At a time when the emerging field of Religious Studies was centered on "experience" but cared little for experiencers, Welch offers a strikingly unmystified account of meditation and its fruits. Decades before the "cultural turn," when D.T. Suzuki's iconoclastic vision of Zen was at its most prominent, he recognized the importance of such things as feeding hungry ghosts and the dual practice of Chan and Pure Land (Nichols 2017: 272).

For this reason, his work was the focus of a five-year seminar at the American Academy of Religion from 2014 to 2018.[1] This seminar represented a collective attempt to reckon with the legacy of Welch's scholarship, to identify its limitations and occlusions, and to chart new vectors for inquiry beyond its horizons. It was motivated, in short, by our own historical moment and professional context. It could hardly be otherwise. Nevertheless, to understand Welch's scholarship we must examine him not in our context but in his. Holmes Welch spent most of his academic career straddling two different institutions at Harvard—the Center for the Study of World Religions (CSWR) and the East Asian Research Center (EARC), now the Fairbank Center—embodying two different nascent fields—Religious Studies and Area Studies. While we must look to Religious Studies to understand his legacy, it is to Area Studies that we must look to understand him and his work.

Area Studies was in the 1950s and 1960s the quintessential Cold War discipline. Spawned from World War II-era intelligence practices, it sought to understand those countries that had fallen to Communism and to prevent others from likewise succumbing. It did so by applying the methods of the social sciences to parts of the world that had been the preserve of humanists, with extensive US government financing, overt and covert (Wallerstein 1997; Cumings 1997). That Holmes Welch must be placed in the context of the Cold War and the field of Area Studies is not terribly surprising. Welch's master's degree (AM) was in Regional Studies-China after all and it hardly takes a detective to spot the Cold War concerns that animate the trilogy, at least in part.

This article will take as its entry point Welch's professional and academic activities in the late 1950s and 1960s. Many in the field know parts of the story below and have surmised others, but few realize the degree and extent to which the Cold War played a role in his scholarship on Buddhism. In fact, to understand his work fully we must reverse the relationship and see his scholarship not just as *a product of* but as *an action taken in* the Cold War. For while Welch may not have quite been a "spy," as one scholar described him, he was certainly spy-adjacent through the late 1960s and produced writing for non-academic audiences that could be seen as propaganda, not in the sense of propagating distortions but of spreading information in the service of a political objective.[2]

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[1] A draft of this paper was originally presented in the seminar's final year. I would like to thank the organizers, Gregory Adam Scott and Eric Hammerstrom, as well as the members of the steering committee, for their efforts. Without that venue, I likely would never have pursued this work. Papers presented there by Scott (2017), Travagnin (2017), Wu (2017), Nichols (2017), and Schicketanz (2017) were published in a special issue of *Studies in Chinese Religions*.

[2] As Mark notes, "[d]uring the Cold War, the distinctions between 'propaganda', 'information policy', and 'publicity' are extremely blurred." The writings to be discussed here constitute propaganda in that they have a clear Cold War objective—to "win hearts and minds" or at least deny them to the Communist bloc—and covert propaganda insofar as the US government's role was hidden (Mark 2004: 194n67). One figure involved at the time considered these articles "scholarly work whose distribution 'enlightens' the public" (Larry Forman, "Buddhist Sourcebook: Holmes Welch's

As such, this essay makes a contribution to the study of religion and the Cold War. The importance of the cultural dimensions of this ideological conflict have long been recognized and the role of religion as well as the impact on religion has been an object of a number of studies since the 1990s (Wallace 2013; for recent examples, see Gunn 2009, Muehlenbeck 2012, and Kirby 2017). Yet these studies have largely focused on the West. Here, I join a more recent turn to the cultural Cold War in Asia (Szonyi and Liu 2014). In particular, this essay adds to the work of scholars such as Eugene Ford (2017), Patrice Ladwig (2017), and Laura Harrington (2020), who have begun to excavate the US government's involvement with Buddhism in Asia during the height of the Cold War, and centers China, which lurked in the background of their accounts. Moreover, it represents an initial attempt to answer Harrington's call for disciplinary histories examining the relationship between the study of Buddhism in the US and the Cold War (Harrington 2020: 416–417) for one corner of the field. It does so through a case study of one rather influential scholar who happened to leave not only a substantial body of work but also a voluminous and publicly archived set of personal and professional papers as well as adult children and friends who could offer oral history.

"Each Fructifying the Other": Foreign Service and Welch's Scholarly Formation 1958–1960

Born in 1921 to an old family of Boston Brahmins,[3] Holmes Hinkley Welch was a brilliant but often troubled boy. Educated in Andover, MA at the Brooks School, a then new offshoot of Groton, Welch was an exceptional student. His younger schoolmate and future colleague in the study of religion, Bardwell Smith, knew him as "a star . . . intellectually and academically." His name adorned a wooden plaque honoring the students of highest scholarship (equivalent of *summa cum laude*) that hung in the dining hall for all to see.[4] Upon graduation in 1938, he entered Harvard, where he pursued a course of study focused heavily on languages, for which he had a talent, including Russian.[5] When the Second World War interrupted his studies, this training led him to serve in the State Department as divisional assistant for the Russian section of the Office of European Affairs. His profound antipathy for Communism began in this period if not earlier. He would later claim that he in some unspecified way attempted to "harm Soviet interests," activity that was not looked well upon at State.[6]

At War's end, Welch returned to private life. He married the daughter of a Polish aristocrat and diplomat whose estates were swallowed in the Russian advances at the end of the First World War. In 1947, his children believe, concerns about the prospect of the Soviets developing nuclear weapons inspired Welch to move his family from Boston to Vermont, which he calculated would be

Memo to Dr. Reischauer," December 27, 1967, box 10, folder 6-7, The Holmes Welch Collection, University of Wisconsin Madison). All subsequent archival documents cited in this paper are from this collection.

[3] The family wealth derived from the firm of Welch & Forbes (formerly Sawyer & Welch), which managed the money of the Boston rich, and was perpetuated by a generation-skipping trust. Interview with Nathaniel Welch and Barbara Orlovsky (neé Welch), Holmes Welch's son and daughter, November 9, 2017.

[4] Interview with Bardwell Smith October 5, 2017.

[5] Holmes Welch transcript, March 14, 1955 Box 1, folder 2-1.

[6] Holmes Welch, Letter to Alexander Solzhenitsyn, June 15, 1978.

comparatively safe from fallout in the event of a nuclear attack on America's cities. They settled in the town of Stowe, Vermont, where he started a business on Mountain Road that was to cater to vacationing skiers and entertain the wealthy central Europeans and Bostonians who had moved to the area. Unfortunately for Welch, it did not snow for three years. Without winter frolickers, "Stowe Center"[7] failed. Welch lost not only his own money but that of family friends and connections who had invested in the venture. Humiliated, he suffered a breakdown and turned to dairy farming, where his precision and attention to detail brought him a measure of success.[8]

Hoping to help him find perspective and recover from the first severe episode in his lifelong struggle with bipolar disorder, Harry Burnham, a friend and schoolmate from Brooks and Harvard who had moved nearby in 1952, introduced him to the text that would change his life, the *Daodejing*.[9] Welch, who had been exposed to Chinese poetry as a boy,[10] began to study the text in earnest and pursue the study of Chinese,[11] first with a professor at Dartmouth and then at Harvard, where he finished his BA in the fall of 1954 and enrolled in the new Master's program in Regional Studies-China,[12] from which he would graduate in 1956. There, he almost certainly encountered for the first time John King Fairbank, the father of China Studies at Harvard who had served in China with the US Office of Strategic Services (the wartime intelligence agency) and would become the patron of Welch's subsequent academic career. All the while, Welch was writing his first book, *Taoism: The Parting of the Way*, which was published in 1957 (Welch 1957).[13]

Welch sold his farm and returned to government following his AM, entering the Foreign Service, which stationed him in Hong Kong until January 31, 1961.[14] At that time, the US Consulate there was reputedly the largest in the world with a staff well out of proportion to the relatively small number of Americans living in the colony. These excess personnel were dedicated to a twofold mission of intelligence gathering and propaganda. Precariously situated on the frontier of Communist China, Hong Kong was officially neutral but played a vital role in collecting and sewing together scraps of information from beyond the Bamboo Curtain. Most of this intelligence was non-covert. Staff would pore over newspapers and periodicals from the Mainland and interview refugees in the hopes of gaining insight into political, social, and military developments. Hong Kong was also a center for the production and dissemination of US propaganda directed at China and the Chinese

[7] The complex included a movie theater, a restaurant, a skating rink, a bowling alley, and ski shops.

[8] He did much of the milking, haying, and sugaring work himself.

[9] Interview with Nathaniel Welch and Barbara Orlovsky (neé Welch), November 9, 2017.

[10] Holmes Welch, The End of Religion, unpublished manuscript, 22, c.1978, box 6, folder 5-2-25.

[11] It was perhaps at this time that he received the Chinese name we find in his papers: Wei Chicu 尉遲醋. (See erratum)

[12] While it is unclear where the funds for this program came from (Michael Szonyi, director of the Fairbank Center, personal communication, November 2, 2021), it seems likely that it was not the government. Set up in 1946 (Suleski 2005: 9), the program preceded the onset of the Cold War in 1947 and the fall of the nationalist government in China in 1949. According to Lindbeck, Harvard did not receive a grant from the Ford Foundation, which became entangled with the CIA, until 1955. In 1956-1957, Ford did provide 15,000 dollars in grants-in-aid to students, though. If Welch was not himself a direct beneficiary of this himself (and there is no indication that he was), he was at least in an environment beginning to be shaped by the Cold War funding nexus (Lindbeck 1971: 141).

[13] Interview with Nathaniel Welch and Barbara Orlovsky (neé Welch), November 9, 2017.

[14] Holmes Welch, Letter to Joseph M. Kitagawa, January 11, 1961. See also Fairbank 1981.

diaspora. Much of this was covert, distributed under imprints and through channels that masked the material's source (Lombardo 2000; Lu 2016; Roberts 2016).

As a political officer, Welch was heavily involved in the first endeavor. He spent his first year in Hong Kong editing the *Survey of the China Mainland Press*[15] and we have a punchy account of his day-to-day activities from an exposé and critique of the Foreign Service entitled "The Real Life of a Foreign Service Officer" that he published in *Harper's* in 1962, not long after his service ended. In this piece, Welch offers a barely veiled account of his own day-to-day routine. "One of his jobs," he writes, "is to collect information about the country where he is assigned." The day starts with language lessons at 8:30, before the real work begins, sorting through a daily inbox filled with 857 pages of some 400,000 words, which Welch stresses is an actual figure. These include translations of newspaper articles from the Mainland and an endless stream of memos and dispatches from his colleagues, based on which the officer would write dispatches of his own. Though the endless churn of paper made it difficult to find the time, he is also tasked with gathering information directly by talking to people, whether the "secretary of [a] student organization" or colleagues from other legations at lunches or cocktail parties—anyone who might have information or rumor to share (Welch 1962b).[16]

The process of endlessly consuming, digesting, and regurgitating information until one's eyes are blurry and brains are fuzzy bears more than a little resemblance to the less pleasant moments of graduate school, and there is a sense in which the US Consulate in Hong Kong was where Welch earned the PhD he never received. It was here that he honed his expertise with the same methods and materials that form the core of his trilogy: interviews and periodicals. Moreover, we might also infer that this training informed the kinds of information that would appear relevant to him. After all, what would be important to a Foreign Service officer in the Cold War? Men, money, ideology, and institutions. Much the same basic objects we see Welch train his attention upon in the trilogy.

It was not merely his research skills and concerns that were shaped by the Foreign Service, however. His content expertise derived from this time as well. According to his biographical sketch in a later grant application, "during the latter three years [of his service] he participated in the Consulate's reportage on all aspects of political and social developments in China, but had particular responsibility for minority peoples, relations with adjacent countries, and non-Christian religion. This entailed periodic interviewing of refugees in the Chinese language."[17] Yet although he had already written on Daoism, Welch knew relatively little about Buddhism prior to his time in Hong Kong. By his own admission, his knowledge was limited to auditing a single course on the history of Chinese Buddhism in 1955. It was an elderly colleague at the Consulate who tutored Welch in Chinese

[15] Holmes Welch, Letter to the editor of *Worldview*, no date, box 6, folder 5-2-69.

[16] Welch's papers include memos of some of these conversations, including one with the British historian of science in China, Joseph Needham. Holmes Welch, "Memo of Conversation: Joseph Needham," August 15, 1958, box 3, folder 3-42.

[17] Ezra F. Vogel, Chinese Personality Project—Department of Health, Education and Welfare grant application, January 27, 1967, box 5, folder 5-1-5. Hereafter: Chinese Personality Project.

that first introduced him to monks[18] and at the outset of his work on Buddhism in 1958 he felt the need to seek the services of a translator.[19]

It is no wonder, then, that the presuppositions of Buddhist Studies of the 1960s are largely absent from his work. They were absent from his training as well. There was nowhere in the US to be trained in Buddhism in the 1950s. Thus, while Richard Robinson, founder of the first American program at Madison, was learning his craft at SOAS in London, Welch was learning his at the Consulate in Hong Kong. It was the concerns of the US government that brought him to this subject and his employment that taught him how to study it. It also provided him with the materials: translations from the *Survey of the China Mainland Press, Current Background, Extracts from the China Mainland Magazines*, the Joint Publications Research Service, Union Research Service, China News Analysis, China Mainland Series, etc., as well as untranslated Communist publications and "a large number of unpublished, but unclassified reports prepared within the Government, which [Welch was] able to gather because of the nature of [his] work."[20] This background had not, he would later tell John Fairbank, given him the means to contribute to scholarship on doctrine, but it had equipped him to consider "practice."[21]

Welch was still in the Foreign Service when he took the first steps of his academic career. In 1958, he became a fellow of the Institute of Oriental Studies, University of Hong Kong, and in 1959, he helped to reestablish the Hong Kong branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, serving on its governing and editorial boards.[22] Welch also penned his first academic articles in these years, publishing "The Chang T'ien-shih and Taoism in China" (1957–1958), "Buddhist Organizations in Hong Kong and Macau" (1961b), and "Chinese Buddhism under the Communists" (1961a). These works do not merely coincide with Welch's government work; they are part and parcel of it. "Buddhist Organizations in Hong Kong and Macau" collects precisely the sort of information that the Consulate might be expected to be interested in: organization of the sangha, major lay groups and their finances, as well as relations with the colonial government, foreign contacts, and political leanings (Welch 1961b). Indeed the introductory section was submitted as an unclassified but official dispatch.[23] I have seen so such dispatch making use of material from "Chang T'ien-shih" in the archive, but the type of information gathered—a profile of a religious leader, a description of Daoist organizations in Taiwan, statistics on

[18] Interview with Chün-fang Yü, June 29, 2018.

[19] Holmes Welch, "Project: a Study of Non-Christian Religion in Communist China," April 15, 1960, p. 4, box 3, folder 3-48; Fung Yee Wang, Letter to Holmes Welch, March 2, 1958, box 3, folder 3-44; Woo Kee Cheong, Letter to Holmes Welch, March 3, 1958, box 3, folder 3-44; Huang Wen Cheng, l\Letter to Holmes Welch, March 5, 1958, box 3, folder 3-44; Yueng Ngai Hin, Letter to Holmes Welch, March 9, 1958, box 3, folder 3-44.

[20] Welch, "Project: A Study of Non-Christian Religion in Communist China," Box 3, folder 3-48.

[21] "I believe I can make an original contribution to the study of Buddhist practice in those years with only a limited knowledge of doctrine. Obviously it would be *better* for a Buddhologist to undertake the project; but he would have to learn the political context and develop his materials and sources, both of which take some little while. Although I am admittedly not the ideal person to do the job, I want to do it and am ready to do it; it needs to be done. Is it not better for the Joint Committee to let me do it than to await the man of their dreams?" Holmes Welch, Letter to John K. Fairbank, November 2, 1960, box 3, folder 3-47.

[22] Vogel, Chinese Personality Project.

[23] Holmes Welch, Buddhist Organizations in Hong Kong and Macau, August 3, 1960, box 6, folder 5-2-32.

Daoism in China before 1949, and Republic of China (Taiwan) government attitudes toward the religion and officially banned affiliates like Yiguan dao 一貫道 is similar to that found in the Hong Kong Buddhism article, suggesting that it too found its way into the Consulate's files. Likewise, "Buddhism under the Communists" does not appear in his papers as a dispatch, but its discussion of institutions, ideology, contacts abroad, and United Front tactics has clear intelligence value. Moreover, it was written using the government sources that Welch had access to at the Consulate and published in the *China Quarterly* (Welch 1961b), funded at the time by the Congress of Cultural Freedom, a CIA front.[24]

In shifting ways and proportions, this mix of religious research and Cold War political activity continued after he resigned from the Consulate in January 1961 to pursue research on a grant from the Joint Committee on China, which had been created two years prior under the aegis of the Social Science Research Council, whose projects were sometimes funded by the Ford Foundation in consultation with the CIA (Cumings 1997: 14–15). Originally conceived as a volume on Buddhism in Communist China to be coauthored with Joseph Kitagawa, this research would ultimately yield Welch's trilogy on modern Buddhism.[25] While we are still reckoning with the academic legacy of that project, Welch himself did not see his research or his prospective career in purely academic terms. In a letter to Fairbank written at the end of 1960, he notes that his resignation was met with a flattering degree of sorrow on the part of his superiors there. Plans had already been made to post him in Taiwan next. Nevertheless, Welch stated, "I do not think I am throwing away a career. On the contrary, I think I am striking a blow for 'popularization,' as we say in the [*Survey of the China Mainland Press*], a new kind of career, in which one alternates between public service and research, with each phase fructifying the other. I hope it may work out that way."[26]

Moreover, in his initial proposal to the Joint Committee, we find a revealing rationale for his project: religion, he argues, is important to study because the Communists seek to create a "new man" who has "surrendered his heart to the Party." Since religion is anathema to Communism, Buddhists provide a useful case study with which to gauge the success of this endeavor. Furthermore, Buddhism has been used in foreign relations as a "[tool] of penetration abroad . . . Another purpose, then, of studying religion in China is to provide facts to those who need them." That is, to steel Burmese Buddhists, for example, against penetration by making clear the ravages of Communist rule. "Intrinsic interest" is listed last. The Communist revolution destroyed a social world and "an effort should be made at once to collect all the data available while there is still data left to collect."[27] Cold War interests are thus front and center from the trilogy's inception and can easily be seen reflected in the form it ultimately took. The *Practice of Chinese Buddhism* establishes the baseline state of the religion (Welch 1967b). *The Buddhist Revival in China* identifies the changes wrought by modernity

[24] The journal was independent and maintained high academic standards (Baum 2013: 237), but nevertheless reflects the CIA's desire to encourage the production of knowledge on contemporary China.

[25] Holmes Welch and Joseph Kitagawa, correspondence, May 25, 1959–August 7, 1961, box 11, folder 6-68. Holmes Welch, Letter to John K. Fairbank, December 17, 1960, box 3, folder 3-48.

[26] Holmes Welch, Letter to John K. Fairbank, December 17, 1960, box 3, folder 3-48.

[27] Holmes Welch, "Project: a Study of Non-Christian Religion in Communist China" April 15, 1960, box 3, folder 3-48.

(Welch 1968). Finally, *Buddhism under Mao* demonstrates in detail what he clearly saw as the Communists' success in undermining, coopting, and destroying the religion to make way for the "new man" (Welch 1972). Yet the volumes also seek to address Asian Buddhists, warning them of ill-considered attempts to modernize and the threat posed by Communism.

Consulting against Communism: The WFB and the Asia Foundation

Welch's work on Chinese Buddhism and his Cold War involvement would continue through the 1960s. Welch spent the period from 1961 to early 1964 based in Hong Kong conducting research with funding from the Joint Committee[28] before returning to Cambridge, MA to take up a position as a researcher at the East Asian Research Center, one of the first Area Studies centers in the US. Both his position and the Center would be renamed over the years, but Welch would remain affiliated with the EARC[29] and, in various ways, with the Center for the Study of World Religions for the rest of his life.[30] These were not his only affiliations, however. Welch also maintained a relationship throughout the 1960s with the Asia Foundation, which provided occasional funding for his work and for whom he sometimes served as a consultant.

Though the Asia Foundation was ostensibly a "non-profit, non-political organization," it was actually an unacknowledged CIA property that sought to establish what might be thought of as an arc of civic containment stretching from Japan to Afghanistan. Founded in 1951 as the Committee for a Free Asia and renamed in 1954, it was headquartered in San Francisco and maintained branch offices throughout Asia in order to make "available private American assistance for a broad range of educational, developmental, cultural, and civic programs . . . [in order to] encourage the growth in Asia of free and independent societies" and "strengthen intra-Asian and Asian-Western relationships in the Free World."[31] The Asia Foundation saw religion as a "civilizing force." Recognizing its social power, it offered aid to Asian religious groups for initiatives that supported civic and social welfare and fostered "free government."[32] This reflects the broader Cold War US ideological position that

[28] He moved his family to Concord MA in 1962 prior to his own departure (Barbara Orlovsky, personal communication, August 20, 2021).

[29] Welch was an Associate in Research from 1964-1979 and a Resident Associate in Research thereafter. Holmes Hinckley Holmes Welch, Draft Entry for *Directory of Scholars and Specialists in Third World Studies*, June 4, 1980, box 12, folder 6-131.

[30] Welch was appointed "Associate in Research" at the CSWR for the 1964-1965, 1965-1966, and 1966-1967 academic years (Letter from President and Fellows of Harvard College, April 6, 1964, box 4, folder 4-1; Letter from President and Fellows of Harvard College, November 1, 1965, box 4, folder 4-2; Letter from President and Fellows of Harvard College, May 16, 1966, box 4, folder 4-3). Welch was subsequently appointed as non-resident assistant director under Wilfred Cantwell Smith from the fall of 1967 through the spring of 1969 (Letter from President and Fellows of Harvard College, September 28, 1967, box 4, folder 4-4; Carman and Dodgson 2006, 32). He cut short this service in order to travel through East Asia on the Center's behalf in the spring of 1969, seeking qualified applicants for Harvard's program in comparative religion (Holmes Welch, Work Report, August 5, 1969, box 4, folder 4-6). He was next affiliated with the Center as a member of its editorial committee beginning in 1977, a position he likely held until his death (Holmes Welch, Letter to Jen Chi-yü, October 24, 1978, box 11, folder 6-55).

[31] "The Asia Foundation: Purposes, Activities, Organizations," 1964, box 10, folder 6-4.

[32] The Asia Foundation, "Policy Guidance No. 9 (Revised)," January 6, 1956, box 10, folder 6-2.

religious belief was an essential line of defense against "godless Communism" (Gunn 2009), thus religion was a key component of US propaganda in the region from the mid-1950s (Frey 2003: 560).

As has been well documented by Eugene Ford, one key result of this tactic was the Foundation's work with the World Fellowship of Buddhists (WFB). Founded in 1950 at the instigation of the Ceylonese Buddhist Dr. Gunapala Piyasena Malalasekera (1899–1973) the organization "represented the most significant institutional expression of a new postwar Buddhist solidarity" and as such an important cultural arena for ideological struggle (Ford 2017: 32; Harrington 2020: 404–406). For this reason, as Ford has shown, the Foundation became an important benefactor of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, underwriting the cost of representatives' travel to its international conferences and offering advice regarding its management and activities. The Foundation sought to strengthen the organization and, by extension, the world Buddhist movement as a hedge against the spread of Communism and to prevent the takeover of the organization by bloc countries which might use it as a tool for propaganda and infiltration.[33]

A vehement anti-Communist with academic credentials and a government background, Welch was a natural partner for the Foundation and had actually sought employment with them before joining the Foreign Service.[34] Both sought to better understand China's involvement with the WFB and both hoped to block Communism's advance. With this aim, the Foundation offered Welch a grant to attend the sixth conference held in Phnom Penh in November 1961 in the "hope that by attending . . . [he would] have the opportunity to see the role played by Chinese Buddhists in the international Buddhist movement and to communicate to others a picture of Buddhism in Hong Kong," where he was pursuing research for the trilogy at the time.[35] Welch attended as part of the Hong Kong delegation, "first as an observer, and later as acting chief delegate."[36] There, Welch would have a front-row seat for the Cold War wrangling he would later describe in an article published in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* (1963) and *Buddhism under Mao* (1972) as Chinese delegates sought first to secure Beijing as the site of the seventh conference and then to see Taiwan expelled.[37]

What Welch makes clear to the Foundation, but obscures in published accounts, is the degree to which he was an active participant. When the plot to expel Taiwan became known, the head delegate from Hong Kong, K.S. Fung, suddenly departed on urgent business, leaving Welch in charge. When the expulsion of Taiwan came to a vote, Welch cast the regional center's vote against the measure, which no doubt warmed his Cold Warrior heart. Though Fung claimed to be surprised at

[33] James J. Dalton, "The World Fellowship of Buddhists (Draft no. 1)" August 3, 1965, 16. box 10, folder 6-5. Hereafter: Dalton, "The World Fellowship of Buddhists."

[34] Robert S. Smith, letters to Holmes Welch, April 12, April 24, May 14, and July 1956, box 10, folder 6-2.

[35] Fenton Babcock, Letter to Holmes Welch, November 6, 1961, box 10, folder 6-3.

[36] Welch was not the only Westerner to attend as an observer of some kind. Two other individuals tied to the Asia Foundation also attended with the US delegation: Richard Gard, as a "special guest" and William Klaussner as an observer. Also in attendance were Joseph Kitagawa and his wife as observers with the US delegation and the British Buddhist Francis Story as a "special guest" of the Ceylonese delegation. (World Fellowship of Buddhists 1961, 5-7). Gard served as a special consultant on Buddhism for the Foundation from 1956-1963 and became "one of the key intermediaries between Washington and the Buddhist world" according to Ford (2017: 69).

[37] Ford discusses this briefly (2017: 161).

the outcome, Welch suspected that the real purpose of the sudden departure had been to allow Welch, whom Fung had known since he first came to Hong Kong, to cast a vote Fung felt he could not.[38] Welch would later recount that he cast another vote against a plan to move the WFB headquarters to Beijing.[39]

In the years that followed, the Asia Foundation began to have doubts about the utility of the Fellowship, which they saw as largely ineffective, and seriously considered withdrawing funding (Ford 2017: 163–166). Meanwhile, Welch continued to maintain a flow of correspondence with figures within the WFB[40] and the Asia Foundation, seeking to strengthen the Fellowship through organizational reform and to outmaneuver the Communists. The organizational issue was addressed first in a memo issued in the name of the Hong Kong and Macau Regional Center, but clearly written by Welch, apparently at his own initiative. In the memo, he laid out a number of critiques of the organization and its conduct. Central to his concerns was the gap between how the WFB constitution dictated business should be run and how it was actually conducted. In his view, the constitution should either be followed or it should be amended. He was also concerned with the issue of representation and sought to ensure that regional centers were actually representative of Buddhism in their countries and that representation was somewhat proportional so that delegations of Buddhist countries could not be outvoted by those of non-Buddhist countries such as the US, which had several centers of dubious representativeness.[41] The president at the time did not respond favorably, preferring that the Fellowship operate in a spirit of comity and consensus rather than the legalistic approach Welch recommended.[42] Nevertheless, Welch persisted in advocating for reform in correspondence with other figures and regional representatives.[43] Welch also seems to have played some role in the transfer of the Fellowship's secretariat from Rangoon to Bangkok necessitated by the coup in Burma.[44]

[38] Holmes Welch, Memorandum to the Asia Foundation on the Sixth WFB Conference in Phnom Penh, 1962, box 7, folder 5-3-2. Welch's presence as an observer for the Hong Kong delegation is confirmed by the published proceedings. The vote he refers to is likely not the original vote on the issue of expulsion by the Credentials and Steering Committee at whose meeting neither Welch nor K.S. Fung is listed as present. Rather, it refers to vote by the plenary session on an amendment to the organization's constitution that would specify that the establishment of a regional center entailed no commitment on issues including sovereignty or territorial integrity. This maneuver allowed Taiwan to retain membership and preserved the "apolitical" character of the Fellowship that the Asia Foundation was concerned to maintain (World Fellowship of Buddhists 1961: 90-93).

[39] Writing in 1979 to arrange a visit to the newly opened People's Republic, Welch is concerned in this letter to downplay his vote, stating that as merely acting chief delegate he polled the other members of the delegation and voted as they instructed. Holmes Welch, Letter to Jen Chi-yü, March 22, 1978, box 11, folder 6-55.

[40] Holmes Welch, Letter to Mrs. Sugi Yamamoto, January 17, 1962, box 2, folder 3-3; and Letter to the Venerable Riri Nakayama, December 13, 1961, box 2, folder 3-3.

[41] Hong Kong Regional Center, Memorandum, Hong Kong, 1962, box 11, folder 6-42.

[42] Holmes Welch, Letter to MP Amarasuriya, January 6, 1963, box 11, folder 6-42.

[43] Holmes Welch, Letter to Amarasuriya, February 2, 1964, box 11, folder 6-31.

[44] Welch reports extensive discussions with U Chan Htoon on that and related matters. Holmes Welch, Letter to Khum Aiem, November 25, 1962, box 11, folder 6-42; MP Amarasuriya, Letter to Holmes Welch, December 18, 1962, box 11, folder 6-31.

This somewhat irregular transfer, in which Princess Poon, a prominent member of the Thai royal family,[45] was designated as acting president, opened the door for further Cold War intrigue. China's regional center attacked Poon's appointment as illegal since no General Council meeting was held. The prominent British Buddhist Christmas Humphries saw this as an opportunity, telling Poon in a letter that "if the China Regional Center does not acknowledge you as Acting President, or your organization in Bangkok as having any authority, they cannot complain if they are not invited to the [next WFB conference to be held in Sarnath] which they will regard as illegally convened. There is no need, therefore, to invite them . . . and they will not be able to waste everyone's time with their eternal politics." Humphries argued that announcing this in the circular would encourage many to come who might otherwise fear a repeat of the "political wrangling which so gravely marred the conference in Phnom Penh."[46] Poon sought Welch's counsel, sending him copies of her correspondence with Humphries. Welch did not concur, encouraging her to send notice of conference to all centers in accordance with the Fellowship's constitution. Avoiding controversy was desirable, "but not inviting Peking [would] itself cause controversy." Instead, Welch suggested sending notice but requiring a response within a certain time, which he thought China would see as an "ultimatum" and rebuff. Then if they tried to come at the last minute, they might suffer visa hang-ups. There remained a risk they might come, but that was unavoidable.[47] Welch does not claim to be speaking for the Foundation here but in a purely personal capacity.[48] Nevertheless, he may have been perceived, rightly, as a figure of influence there.

Welch also offered Poon advice about the activities of upcoming seventh conference. He suggested an afternoon of lectures by scholars as a break from committee work or a symposium on the future of the sangha or some such important topic. This he felt would result in "more work of substance, less eloquent speeches and ceremony." This would also limit the opportunity for passing measures that the Fellowship would be embarrassingly unable to enact and, though he does not say so, for Communist interference. In addition, Welch, who had been dismayed at the lack of coverage of the Phnom Penh conference, also encouraged her to notify the world's leading papers three or four months in advance.[49] Poon's response was apparently not enthusiastic.[50] Nevertheless, the former suggestion at least was incorporated into the conference.[51]

Wanting to personally attend the Sarnath conference, Welch approached the Asia Foundation for funding to attend and publish an account.[52] Although the Foundation had changed its stance on the value of the Fellowship in the wake of the 1963 Buddhist crisis in Vietnam and approved "a large burst of funding" for the conference (Ford 2017: 190), he was told that funding was limited to

[45] For background on Poon, see Ford (2017: 192-193).

[46] Christmas Humphries, Letter to Princess Poon forwarded to Holmes Welch, March 6, 1964, box 2, folder 3-5.

[47] Holmes Welch, Letter to Princess Poon, March 14, 1964, box 2, folder 3-5.

[48] The letter was written after his return to the US and seemingly before he took up his appointments at Harvard. At the top, he simply gives his home address in Concord, MA, the same address to which Poon sent her letter.

[49] Holmes Welch, Letter to Princess Poon, March 14, 1964, box 2, folder 3-5.

[50] Holmes Welch, Letter to MP Amarasuriya, July 2, 1964, folder 11, box 6-31.

[51] Dalton, "The World Fellowship of Buddhists."

[52] Holmes Welch, Letter to Douglas P. Murray, September 23, 1964, box 10, folder 6-4.

delegates and invitees of the secretariat.[53] It is likely not coincidental that he was shortly thereafter invited as "distinguished guest" and informal representative of the CSWR and Cambridge Buddhist Association of which he was the vice-president.[54] The Asia Foundation ultimately paid his round-the-world airfare and the excess baggage fare incurred by his tape recorder and requested in return a couple weeks of consulting in Hong Kong (discussed below) and a stop in San Francisco to brief Foundation staff, as well as a written report, regardless of whether or not anything was published.[55] He later reported to the Asia Foundation that "The VIIth represented a net gain. At the VIth the WFB's morale was shaken by the intrusion of politics and a feeling of ineffectiveness and futility. At the VIIth, morale rose [because] . . . politics were successfully kept out of sight . . . The Thais are as non-political and businesslike as any group that is ever likely to staff the secretariat." But "almost all Asian countries want to use the WFB for their own goals, which are often far more political than the American goal of denying its use to the Communists. Americans, I think, are as much entitled as the Ceylonese, the Thais, the Russians, and so on to play the game: keep politics out of sight, protest (as did the Malayans, Koreans, Indians, Nepalese, and others at Sarnath) that politics are inadmissible and un-Buddhist, but still pursue political objectives."[56]

Welch's reports and consultations with the Asia Foundation played a significant role in its decisions regarding support for the WFB. An August 1965 draft report prepared by James Dalton, one of the Foundation's representatives, on the issue draws a good deal from Welch's confidential and published accounts and was passed to Welch himself for comment prior to submission. It also notes a number of recommendations made by Welch in the wake of the seventh conference in meetings held at the Asia Foundation's headquarters in San Francisco on his way back from Sarnath. Welch argued for strengthening the secretariat and funding a permanent staff as well as encouraging monastic participation and promoting regional centers. Dalton further notes that Welch was a participant in an ongoing "flow of correspondence" on these matters with foundation personnel.[57] Welch continued to consult for the Foundation on these matters, flying out to San Francisco in August 1965 and January 1966 for three days of paid advising[58] and offering views about the direction of the WFB and possible successors to Poon as president.[59] as well as the emergence of several alternative world Buddhist organizations that appeared as if they might rival or eclipse the WFB.[60] Although

[53] Douglas P. Murray, Letter to Holmes Welch, October 21, 1964, box 2, folder 3-5.

[54] Holmes Welch, Letter to Princess Poon, October 23, 1964, March 14, 1964, box 2, folder 3-5; Holmes Welch, Letter to Douglas P. Murray, October 24, 1964, box 2, folder 3-5. Welch's affiliation with the Cambridge Buddhist Association should not be understood as confirmation that he was himself a Buddhist. I will treat that issue in a future publication.

[55] Douglas P. Murray, Letter to Holmes Welch, November 13, 1964, box 2, folder 3-5.

[56] Dalton, "The World Fellowship of Buddhists."

[57] Dalton, "The World Fellowship of Buddhists."

[58] At a rate of 60 USD/day plus a 20 USD/day per diem (roughly 520 and 175 USD, respectively, today). William J. Sheppard, Letter to Holmes Welch, August 4, 1965, box 10, folder 6-5.

[59] Harry H. Pierson, Letter to Holmes Welch, September 16, 1965, box 10, folder 6-5; Holmes Welch, Letter to Harry Pierson, November 8, 1965, box 10, folder 6-5.

[60] These included the United World Buddhist Association (Ceylon), the Saigon Buddhist Youth Group, Chinese Buddhist Sangha Association (Taiwan), and the World Buddhist Order (Vietnam). Harry H. Pierson, "International Buddhist Organizations: Conversation with Dr. Richard A. Gard," December 16, 1965, box 10, folder 6-5.

Welch was consulted by both the WFB and the Asia Foundation, little seems to have actually changed. Still, he continued to press his case in subsequent letters,[61] becoming frustrated at what he saw as the Fellowship's continuing preference for ceremony over substance, lack of representativeness, and general ineffectualness. He noted in one letter, "I have said all this before but then Cassandras are never noted for their reticence."[62]

Writing Against the Reds: Propaganda in the Asian Press

We have already noted that one of Welch's arguments for the value of his work on Chinese Buddhism was the political enlightenment that it might offer to individuals unaware of the threat posed by international Communism. Certainly, this was one of the reasons for the Asia Foundation's interest in and support of Welch. His scholarly credentials and Harvard connections ensured that his voice would carry authority,[63] and his fervent anti-Communism ensured that he would be on the same page. This is why the Foundation was happy to see versions of Welch's reports and other writings published and distributed in Asia. There were three major examples of this: a series of articles published in the Far Eastern Economic Review, articles and letters to the editor published in World Buddhism, and a sourcebook on Buddhism in China prepared in Hong Kong at least in part at Welch's instigation.

Welch published three articles in the 1960s in the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, a Hong Kong-based publication long considered the *Wall Street Journal* of Asia. In these articles, we see him speaking quite intentionally to English-speaking Asian elites as well as Western audiences. Two dealt with the World Fellowship of Buddhists. The first, 1962's "Buddhists in the Cold War," presents a slightly amended and edited version of the report that he filed with the Asia Foundation. Lamenting the lack of attention paid to the event in the press, he paints a picture of an "extraordinarily photogenic" conference and briefly sketches some of the fascinating characters, before turning to his central narrative how Communism was "signally defeated" in its years-long attempt to "influence and win control of the world Buddhist movement." Welch's account of maneuvers and counter-maneuvers is engaging and clearly designed to portray the Communist delegations as politicizing the proceedings but is leavened with enough additional material, including Welch's criticism of the American delegates, to maintain an impression of objectivity (Welch 1962a). In 1965's "Buddhism after the Seventh," in contrast, Welch declares the conference a success for its very uneventfulness. Success is defined for the readers not as any particular, substantial accomplishment, but simply as the absence of "political wrangling." With the PRC absent and the USSR delegation acting more agreeably, the proceedings were kept safe from the specter of "infiltration." Welch held out hopes for improvement in the future, arguing that the WFB, with proper staff and support, could provide guidance and foster consensus at this crossroads when Buddhists, he felt, must adapt their tradition to the modern world

[61] Holmes Welch, Letter to Douglas Murray, April 30, 1965, box 10, folder 6-5; Douglas P. Murray, Letter to Holmes Welch, May 5, 1965, box 10, folder 6-5; Holmes Welch, Letter to Haydn Williams, June 21, 1965, box 10, folder 6-5.
[62] Holmes Welch, Letter to Harry H. Pierson, January 28, 1966, box 10, folder 6-6.
[63] Larry Forman, "Buddhist Sourcebook: Holmes Welch's memo to Dr. Reischauer," December 27, 1967, box 10, folder 6-7.

while protecting it "against forces that are attempting to undermine and persecute it" (Welch 1965: 435).

The intervening piece, "Asian Buddhists and China," provides an account of his conversations with Buddhists in several Asian countries on the subject of China and its treatment of Buddhism. Welch reports bafflement and frustration with his interlocutor's dismissals and rationalizations of what he sees as Communist perversion and abuse of the religion. Welch attributes this to a complicated web of geopolitical hopes and fears that made playing along with Chinese Communist fictions about Buddhism the more attractive option. Ultimately, however he attributes this stance to "the nature of Buddhism itself," which demands that monks avoid partisanship that would mire them deeper in the three poisons of craving, aversion, and ignorance. For this reason, he concludes that Buddhists are not only unwilling to actively oppose Communism but "inherently disposed to co-operate in [Buddhism's] own destruction" (Welch 1963: 15). Welch got a degree of blowback for this piece from Asian Buddhists, which confirms that he was in fact reaching his intended audience, if not with the intended effect.[64] The foreign minister of Thailand, Dr. Thanat Khoman, made his displeasure known to Donald Rochlen of the US Information Service, who passed this information on to Welch at the meeting of the Association of Asian Studies. In an attempt to soothe such ruffled feathers, Welch clarified his reasons for writing this piece in personal correspondence with Khoman and in a letter to the editor of *World Buddhism*. While Welch noted that he had never taken refuge, he nevertheless described himself as a "friend of Buddhism." He had two aims in writing: 1) He wanted "Western readers to stop saying that all Buddhist monks are 'soft on Communism.'" "Pure monks," he argued, are not soft, just silent. 2) He "wanted to make Asian readers realize the danger of keeping silent . . . to warn them about the views and activities of the political bhikkhus" promoting the compatibility of Buddhism and Communism.[65] Welch was thus seeking to speak for these necessarily silent "pure monks" who might know the dangers of the Communism but be unwilling to be drawn into the red dust of the Cold War.

This was not the only time Welch addressed Buddhists in Asia through *World Buddhism*. Founded in Ceylon as an organ of the WFB, *World Buddhism* became independent when the WFB's presidency and secretariat rotated to Burma. Welch sought to have his *China Quarterly* article "The Reinterpretation of Chinese Buddhism" reprinted there in 1965. The article describes the reinterpretation of Buddhist history and doctrine by Buddhists in the PRC in light of Marxism and the recasting of killing as an act of compassion, arguing that the party seeks to coopt, dilute, and ultimately discard the religion. In *World Buddhism*, however, it was to have begun with a new opening paragraph, the crux of which was that what followed was reliable because the article examined reinterpretations of Buddhism in openly published Chinese works. People, Welch asserted, do not exaggerate their own faults. Therefore, the reader can be certain that what is actually happening is

[64] It did not help that the piece was quoted out of context by *Time* magazine, noting only that Welch stated that many Buddhists believed the religion had much in common with Communism ("The Queen Bee," 1963)

[65] Holmes Welch, Letter to Thanat Khoman, foreign minister of Thailand, March 27, 1964, box 11, folder 6-42. Holmes Welch, Letter to the editor of World Buddhism, April 13, 1964, box 11, folder 6-41.

at least as bad as what we read there.[66] Welch apparently had settled on the idea of reprinting his article in *World Buddhism* after first discussing with the Asia Foundation the possibility of simply printing copies and distributing them through, presumably, their offices.[67]

Welch also published letters to the editor. In response to a letter from Fazun 法尊 (1902–1980) and other PRC monks defending the state of Buddhism in China, Welch threw down a forceful challenge. If they wished to "quiet our fears," he argued they should answer ten questions on topics including the number of monks and nuns; the number of ordinations; the state of practice at Jinshan 金山寺, which he considered a model monastery; and how pro-War statements can be reconciled with Buddhism. "Surely," he wrote, these are "not matters of national security" that must be kept secret. If the questions can be answered, no doubt people would cease to believe "slanders of reactionary imperialist henchmen." If not, they would continue to do so.[68]

A final piece of propaganda with which Welch was involved was the production of a sourcebook on Chinese Buddhism in the People's Republic. As we have already noted, on his way back from Sarnath, Welch was invited to consult with the Asia Foundation's representative in Hong Kong. There, the Union Research Institute (URI, *Youlian yanjiusuo* 友聯研究所), a China-watching organization founded and staffed by Chinese intellectuals in exile with funding from the Asia Foundation (Baum 2013: 234–235), was to begin a study on how China was using Buddhism to further its foreign policy, a topic for which Welch's expertise would be helpful.[69] URI's project would ultimately shift its focus—at Welch's suggestion, it seems—to the production of a sourcebook that would gather key documents pertaining to the state of Buddhism in the People's Republic.[70] The plan was to produce a joint publication with work being undertaken by URI and costs substantially defrayed by the Asia Foundation. At Welch's suggestion, the volume was not originally to come out under URI's imprint, but under that of the Hong Kong Buddhist Association.[71] This, Welch thought, would increase its legitimacy in the eyes of fellow Buddhists elsewhere in Asia.[72]

All did not go to plan, however. By the beginning of 1966, the scale of the project had been reduced and plans for an English translation faded.[73] Although Welch was initially pleased with the project when he was sent an outline of its contents,[74] his enthusiasm faded when he saw a full manuscript. He felt the introductions needed "severe editing" and even raised the possibility of

[66] Holmes Welch, Letter to Austin de Silva, March 11, 1965, box 11, folder 6-41.

[67] Holmes Welch, Letter to Haydn Williams, president of the Asia Foundation, June 21, 1965, box 10, folder 6-5.

[68] Holmes Welch, letter to the editor of *World Buddhism*, April 13, 1964, box 11, folder 6-41. The date here is that of the letter. Although a clipping of it appears in Welch's papers, the date of publication is not included.

[69] Douglas P. Murray, Letter to Holmes Welch, November 13, 1964, box 10, folder 6-4.

[70] Douglas P. Murray, Letter to Holmes Welch, May 5, 1965, box 10, folder 6-5; Joseph Anderson Shih, Letter to Edgar Pike and Stephen Uhalley, May 13, 1965, box 10, folder 6-5.

[71] Joseph Anderson Shih, Letter to Edgar Pike and Stephen Uhalley, May 13, 1965, box 10, folder 6-5; Edgar N. Pike, Letter to Maria Yen, March 26, 1965, box 10, folder 6-5; Maria Yen, Letter to Edgar N. Pike, June 15, 1965, box 10, folder 6-5.

[72] Larry Forman, "Buddhist Sourcebook: Holmes Welch's memo to Dr. Reischauer," December 27, 1967, box 10, folder 6-7.

[73] Stephen Uhalley, Letter to Holmes Welch, January 19, 1966, box 10, folder 6-6.

[74] Holmes Welch, Letter to Harry H. Pierson, May 15, 1967, box 10, folder 6-7.

editing the volume himself instead of writing *Buddhism under Mao*, a task he had begun to dread.[75] Concern turned to annoyance when he discovered the Hong Kong sangha had not been consulted in the selection of materials as planned. Monks, he felt, are the best judges of monkish matters.[76] Welch's comments about editing the volume himself apparently led URI to believe that Welch would supply the funds for translation, at which point Welch appears to have fired off a memo to Edwin Reischauer detailing at length his criticism of the project.[77] The Sourcebook did eventually appear in print credited to the Hong Kong Buddhist Association (*Xianggang fojiao lianhehui* 香港佛教聯合會) and the Hong Kong Buddhist Sangha Association (*Fojiao sengqie lianhehui* 佛教僧伽聯合會), as well as the Union Research Institute (Xianggang fojiao lianhehui, et al, 1968),[78] and was distributed through various Buddhist associations.[79] The translation Welch hoped for never appeared, though he continued to raise the issue into 1969.[80]

Conclusion: The Parting of the Way

In conclusion, we can see that Welch's work on Buddhism is very much a part of the Cold War cooperation between academia and the US government that gave birth to Area Studies. Welch not only received his AM in that field; he effectively recapitulated its origins in US intelligence, serving the State Department first during the War and then in the Foreign Service in Hong Kong in the late 1950s. Welch's work appears exceptional for the Buddhist Studies and Religious Studies of the day, because those fields were not a part of his training. Welch was starting his academic career as they were just beginning to take shape. Instead, he learned both his craft and his subject peering between the slats of the Bamboo Curtain for the government. Welch's academic career began during this period and we find his writings and some of the memoranda in his papers to be of dual use.[81] They were at once intelligence for the State Department and scholarship for the public. Even when he left government service, this pattern—each side of his work, the political and the academic, each fructifying the other—continued. His cooperation with the Asia Foundation secured funding for the research to which we are still indebted today. It also gave him a role in the WFB as an advisor—and for a moment, as a participant—in order to strengthen the arc of civic containment the Foundation sought to maintain in Asia through the publication of information that rebutted Communist propaganda.

In all this, Welch was most likely a witting participant. While there is no explicit indication that Welch was aware that the Asia Foundation was a CIA front prior to that fact becoming public in

[75] Holmes Welch, Letter to Harry H. Pierson, June 26, 1967, box 10, folder 6-7.

[76] Holmes Welch, Letter to Harry H. Pierson, August 8, 1967, box 10, folder 6-7.

[77] I did not see this memo itself in Welch's papers. Whether it is not there or was filed under "Reischauer" rather than "Asia Foundation" is unclear.

[78] According to WorldCat, there seems to have been an updated edition printed the following year as well (Xianggang fojiao lianhehui 1969).

[79] Lawrence T. Forman, Letter to Holmes Welch, June 3, 1968, box 10, folder 6-8.

[80] Holmes Welch, Letter to John E. James, July 29, 1969, box 10, folder 6-9.

[81] Price has also noted the "dual use" of such research as both scholarship and intelligence in the field of anthropology (Price 2016).

1967, he probably knew or was able surmise its nature given the work he did for the Consulate in Hong Kong.[82] Certainly, Welch had no objection. He continued to work on the Sourcebook and court the Foundation for funding[83] after it was exposed. Furthermore, his concern to obscure the Union Research Institute's role in the sourcebook indicates that he was well aware that he was involved in a propaganda effort. Whereas Dick Gard served on the payroll of the Foundation as an in-house consultant for several years (Ford 2017: 68), Welch could be seen perhaps as a kind of freelance Cold Warrior. Foundation funds created opportunities for Welch to pursue research but not the motivation.[84] Welch's activities went well beyond what the Foundation funded him for. His consultations with the WFB were undertaken under his own initiative. He also wrote a fourth piece for the *Far Eastern Economic Review* rebutting Chinese use of Buddhism as window dressing for diplomatic purposes in 1973 (Welch 1973) after he had ceased to be involved with the Foundation.

Throughout it all, Welch seems to have approached his engagements with what he would have termed "tact." This was the quality he identified as most essential to US attempts to shape the world in an article on the Ford Foundation published in 1953, even before Welch returned to Harvard to finish his degree. In this article, he argued that the Foundation, and by extension the US, was right to "support" the adoption of American ideas and practices, but not "impose" them. "Education," he implies, is useful in this regard, but not "propaganda." Channeling Laozi, Welch warns against direct intervention: "The more [the Foundation] tries to get [things] done by action, the more the result will only be a reaction." He argues that the proper approach is to be found in the *Daodejing*: "As to the best man . . . the people merely know that he exists . . . When his task is accomplished, his work done, throughout the country everyone says, 'We have done it ourselves'" (Welch 1953: 26). Welch sought to operate quietly, to "provide facts to those that need them" in the confidence that no one possessed of the facts would choose communism. The full provenance of those facts was a matter for discretion.

By the beginning of the 1970s, however, all this was winding down, and Welch was turning back toward Daoism and away from the political involvement of his Buddhist work, though the motivating concerns remained. There were likely several reasons for this. Welch served on the steering committee for the first International Conference on Taoism held in 1968. This brought him into the world of Daoist studies and into the orbit of Anna Seidel, with whom he would become romantically involved. Buddhism was also losing some of its shine for him at this point. Welch was becoming burned out by the time he got to *Buddhism under Mao*, making a change of topic attractive. In the end, though, the primary issue may have been funding. Welch longed to return to Asia and he dreamed up projects that would take him back there,[85] but by the end of the 60s, funding for Area Studies was

[82] Many suspected the relationship. Price reports that one anthropologist was able to sniff it out based on the requirement that grant applicants to the Foundation supply, not letters of recommendation, but all past addresses and affiliations with political organizations (Price 2016: 181).

[83] For the Second International Conference on Taoist Studies. Holmes Welch, Letter to Robert S. Schwantes, March 8, 1969, box 10, folder 6-9.

[84] David H. Price has made a thorough investigation of the ways in which anthropology in this period was shaped by such funding opportunities and collaborations with intelligence agencies, witting or unwitting (Price 2016).

[85] Among these was Ezra Vogel's proposed Chinese Personality Project, which would have "collect[ed] the large scale data on Chinese personality and . . . explore[d] Chinese adjustment to social change." Welch was to have served as

becoming tighter. Developments at home rearranged government priorities, and the exposure of the extent of the field's cooperation with the government, including the fact that the Asia Foundation was funded by the CIA, led to a new self-criticism in the field (Wallerstein 1997: 220–226). Most of Welch's potential projects failed to win grants in this new environment.[86] In the end, it was a project on Daoism that found favor with the grant-making gods, taking him to Japan and the next phase of his life.[87]

Welch's life and career was, no doubt, to some degree an outlier in the study of Buddhism. Likely few other scholars of his time were as deeply shaped by and active in the Cold War as he was. Yet this case study nevertheless highlights the importance of heeding Harrington's call for a new disciplinary history. While the role of the Cold War in shaping fields such as Area Studies (Cumings 1997; Wallerstein 1997; Harootunian 2010: 25–58) and anthropology (Price 2016) has been well researched, considerations of the formation of Buddhist Studies have tended to focus on its genesis in nineteenth-century Europe. Yet as Harrington points out, the story of Buddhist Studies in the US begins in the post-war era with a government grant to found the first department at the University of Wisconsin in 1961 (Harrington 2020: 416). How did the geopolitical context of the Cold War, including but not limited to US government funding and interests, shape the field as it emerged in the United States?

Some additional lines of inquiry are suggested by Welch's career. Kitagawa, for instance, is typically understood in the context of the Chicago School, but he was initially to have been a co-author of Welch's planned book on Buddhism in Communist China and, like Welch, he was in attendance at the sixth conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists. Welch was also involved with an intriguing but abortive 1966 initiative by scholars of Buddhist Studies to centrally organize the newborn field in North America under the aegis of the Association of Asian Studies. The attempt was justified in part based on the religion's "practical interest" due to its influence in contemporary Asia. Scholars identified "urgent gaps," including not only more typical Buddhological and Religious

project director in Taiwan while Vogel would have been the primary investigator (Vogel, Chinese Personality Project). Another was a proposal to "salvage" materials related to modern Buddhism in China for translation and publication (Modern Buddhism box 5, folders 5-1-9 to 5-1-11). This project was originally outlined by Richard Robinson and endorsed at a summit of North American Buddhist Studies in 1966 (Welch 1966: 12). Most noteworthy, however, was Welch's proposal for a Center for Research on Buddhism and Nutrition. If the juxtaposition of the title is somewhat surprising, the content of the proposal is jaw-dropping. Welch hoped to establish in Taiwan a "model monastery" along the lines of Jinshan 金山 or Gaomin 高旻 in pre-Communist China with US foundation money. This would serve as a kind of living laboratory that would (1) rescue the tradition, (2) facilitate its study, (3) provide a research population for the study of vegetarianism to address the "coming food crisis," and (4) prevent the politicization of monks that had occurred in Vietnam from happening in Taiwan (Holmes Welch, "Center for Research on Buddhism and Nutrition: A Preliminary Statement," October 10, 1964, box 5, folder 5-1-1). He also published a case for ethnographic conservation in general and of Chinese Buddhist monasticism in particular (less the concern for nutrition) in the *Saturday Review* (Welch 1967a).

[86] Holmes Welch, Letter to Edward T. Wilcox, Director of General Education, Harvard College, October 17, 1978, box 4, folder 4-8.

[87] Welch received a Guggenheim Fellowship (1972-1973) and Senior Fellowship from the NEH (1973-1974) for this work which was never completed due to his deteriorating mental health.

Studies concerns, but also potentially instrumentalizable knowledge of "religious psychology" and "Buddhism as practiced today" (Welch 1966). Was the venture stillborn due to a simple lack of follow through or did the 1967 revelations of CIA-backing for the Asia Foundation and other funding agencies play some role?

Such traces suggest the existence of a "hidden transcript" of Buddhist Studies in the United States. Retrieving that transcript would allow us to recover a dimension of our disciplinary history beyond the more familiar narratives of Religious Studies' agonistic and ever incomplete separation from theology and Buddhology's roots in Orientalism and European imperialism by taking into account the forces and incentives at work on our more immediate scholarly ancestors in the Cold War era.

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Erratum

Correction to note 11: The note states: "It was perhaps at this time that he received the Chinese name we find in his papers: Wei Chicu 尉遲醋." This is an error. Welch's Chinese surname was actually the compound Yuchi 尉遲 (which alters the pronunciation of the first character) and the given name Han 酣, a transcription mistake on my part. The name may have been received in Hong Kong since the Cantonese pronunciation, Waici Ham, more closely resembles the English, and the oldest document on which I saw it dates from that time. I am indebted to Lei Ying for bringing this to my attention.

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